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Lucia A Keegan 07/27/2006 09:41:55 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT -
Israeli-Lebanese Conflict: Secretary Rice in the Region, Peace
keeping Troops
WTO
PARIS - Tuesday, July 25, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Lebanese - Israeli Conflict - Secretary Rice in the Region
Lebanese - Israeli Conflict - Peace keeping Troops
WTO

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Right-of-center Le Figaro's front page announces the "surprise visit
of Rice in Beirut." For popular right-of-center Le Parisien the
Secretary's visit marks the "Sudden Awakening of American

SIPDIS
Diplomacy." Descriptions of a cease-fire as viable by Secretary Rice
mean: "Washington is not discarding any options." For now, however,

Le Parisien acknowledges that regional peace is a distant prospect.
(See Part C)

Right-of-center Le Figaro says that "Syria wants to break from its current isolation on the international scene... This weekend, George W. Bush asked his Saudi allies to intervene to convince Syria to break its alliance with Iran and come back into the fold of the moderate Arab countries. But for this to happen Damascus will need to be offered serious compensation." Left-of-center Le Monde notes that Secretary Rice told the press that "a solution to the crisis does not necessarily need to be obtained with the help of Syria. She highlighted that the American embassy in Damascus could serve as a 'channel' for discussions with the Syrian authorities." Le Monde quotes Secretary Rice: "the problem is not that we are not talking to the Syrians, the problem is that the Syrians have not acted."

Right-of-center Le Figaro reports on informal talks in Brussels concerning the possibility of a NATO peace keeping mission in Lebanon. (See Part C)

Left-of-center Le Monde's front-page notes that: "Israel has accepted the idea of a powerful multi-national force in southern Lebanon." Left-of-center Liberation, for its part says that: "Israel's principal allies have changed their tune and now the possibility of a real diplomatic solution to the conflict is open." Nabih Berri, President of the Lebanese Parliament is profiled in Catholic La Croix and grants an interview to left-of-center Liberation: "Israel is not trying to free its kidnapped soldiers, nor do away with Hezbollah, but wants to destroy Lebanon and its civilization... As for France, if it loses its hold in Lebanon it will no longer have anything to do in the Middle East... We need [a country] that can make decisions more or less independently of the Americans." For right-of-center Le Figaro "The time for compromise has come for the Israelis... But Israel is counting on European hesitation to get involved in order to buy more time."

Right-of-center Le Figaro notes that Jacques Chirac is asserting himself vis-à-vis the Lebanese crisis and foreign policy becomes once again a critical factor in domestic politics in France." French Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy was interviewed on the evening newscast on privately-run TF1 television yesterday. He said that he is convinced of three things: "there cannot be a strictly military solution to the conflict, the only objective of the international community should be to guarantee Lebanon's sovereignty and France cannot act outside of the framework of the UN." He added that possible conditions for a cease-fire are: "Hezbollah disarmament and the liberation of prisoners." He insisted on "finding a political solution and stopping the violence." He evoked "the historical relations between France and Lebanon", and declared himself "optimistic for diplomacy."

The recent Human Rights Watch Report qualified as "damning" on the front page of left-of-center Le Monde. Human Rights Watch says in its report that no American military intelligence officer has been court-martialed and is asking Congress to appoint an independent committee to examine the real scope of the torture in Iraq as well as the complicity of high-level authorities... The organization is also calling for George W. Bush to appoint an independent prosecutor to bring to justice the civilian and military authorities that are either responsible for or closed their eyes to the treatment of the prisoners in Iraq."

Right-of-center Le Figaro's front page announces that concerning the WTO: "The U.S. has 'Provoked a Crisis.'" Right-of-center economic Les Echos' headline: "Failure to Liberalize World Trade" and "the U.S. accused of being the cause of the failure." (See Part C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Lebanese - Israeli Conflict - Secretary Rice in the Region

"American Revision"

The editorial by Francois Ernewein in Catholic La Croix (07/25): "Condoleezza Rice's surprise visit to Beirut and her various statements mark a readjustment of the U.S. position... But we should not be deceived, this sudden sensitivity for the dismay of the Lebanese people, this call for an immediate cease fire are in no way signs of a disagreement between the U.S. and Israel as to the

direction of the operations in Lebanon. They do not nuance in anyway the objective of the two governments: to do away with the threat posed by Hezbollah supported by the rogue states: Iran and Syria... But even if the violence continues, the cards are now more or less back in the hands of the diplomats."

"The Time for Compromise Has Come"

Renaud Girard writes in right-of-center Le Figaro (07/25): "In terms of modern-day diplomacy... there is always a time for public gesticulation and a time for serious and secret political negotiations. Condoleezza Rice's visit yesterday in Israel falls under the first category. She has no intention whatsoever to pressure the Israeli government... For the U.S., Tsahal's operations in Lebanon to wipe out Hezbollah falls within the framework of the global war on terrorism... But since the Secretary does have to talk about something with the Israel authorities, she will discuss the 'humanitarian' implications of the crisis."

"Cease Fire"

Gilles Dauxerre in regional daily La Provence's editorial (07/25): "Cease fire - the American Secretary of State has finally said the magic words that could contribute to resolving the war between Israel and Hezbollah... In spite of its fire power, Israel has not been able to weaken Hezbollah and now the time has come to sit around a table and discuss a solution, even the 'puppet masters' Iran and Syria will need to be present."

Lebanese - Israeli Conflict - Peace keeping Troops

"An International Peace keeping Force Still in Limbo"

Marc Henry in right-of-center Le Figaro (07/25): "The idea of replacing UNIFIL soldiers with NATO troops was put forward for the first time last weekend by the U.S. and Israel... The U.S. delegation to the UN has been very active and has already started to think about the conditions for the deployment of some 10 to 20 thousand NATO soldiers under French or Turkish command and mandated by the UN... Considering their poor reputation in the Middle East following the intervention in Iraq, the Americans have ruled out the possibility of taking part in an international peace keeping mission in Lebanon... According to experts this will prevent the NATO flag from being planted in the region and the mission will remain under UN control... With regard to the conflict in Lebanon the U.S. is more than willing to pass the burden of responsibility onto its European allies, France being on the front lines."

WTO

"The Doha Round Put to Sleep"

Aude Marcovitch comments in right-of-center Le Figaro's economic supplement Le Figaro Economie (07/25): "Yesterday the death blow [to the Doha Round] was inflicted by Washington that dodged having to make new proposals concerning domestic agricultural subsidies... According to European observers the failure of the Doha Round was relatively foreseeable with the mid-term elections looming... The USTR, for her part was pointing an accusatory finger at Brussels... because of its refusal to lower customs tariffs... Both Susan Schwab and the European Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson predict a future filled with disagreements brought before the WTO."

"Egoism"

Centrist business daily La Tribune's editorial by Pascal Aubert (7/25): "The WTO trade negotiations are agonizing under the indifferent gaze of the world... What is ironic is that originally the Doha Round was intended to stimulate development by helping poor countries benefit from the liberalization of trade... But in the end, the individual countries' national interests come before the rest... Who could possibly believe that President Bush would run the risk of angering his country's cotton or soy producers with just a few months left until the mid term elections? And in the same way the French firm line - that some may call intransigence - is not altogether disconnected from the presidential elections in 2007."

"The WTO Fiasco"

Right-of-center economic Les Echos' editorial by Dominique Seux (07/25): "The failure of the WTO negotiations is the fault of the U.S. (a lot) and Europe (less) both unwilling to make the necessary concessions... The absence of an agreement at the WTO will not put a stop to international trade, which has grown by 25 percent over the last three years... Indeed governments have found a way to sidestep

binding multilateral accords by striking bilateral agreements... But this strategy is a short-term one from the point of view of poor countries. Bilateral agreements are merely the expression of the law of the mightiest." STAPLETON